Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 L-03 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 6748

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E.O. 11652: N/A TAGS: EAIR, TH

SUBJ: CIVAIR: TERMINATION OF PAA 841/842

REF: A) STATE 199671 B) BANGKOK 14723 C) STATE 2001102

- 1. DESPITE OUR EARLY MORNING NOTIFICATION OT UNDER SECRETARY SIRILAK THAT DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY WALDMANN COULD ARRIVE IN BANGKOK FOR TALKS SEPT. 30, INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETING THIS MORNING (SEPT 13) UPHELD ORIGINAL DECISION TO TERMINATE PAA FLIGHTS 841/842 EFFECTIVE SEPT 12. PAA REP HAS BEEN INFORMED AND WILL HALT INCOMING FLIGHT AT HONG KONG SATURDAY MORNING (SEPT 14). MEETING ALSO ENDORSED RESUMPTION OF TALKS IN BANGKOK OCT 28.
- 2. WE THINK BEST WE CAN DO NOW IS TO ADOPT DAMAGE LIMITING POSTURE IN PREPARATION FOR RESUMPTION OF TALKS AND TO TRY NEXT WEEK ONCE AGAIN, MAINLY THROUGH AIRLINE CHANNELS, TO SECURE AUTHORITY TO RESUME FLIGHTS 841/842 PENDING RESULTS OF TALKS. TO THAT END WE HAVE ENDORSED PROPOSAL BY PAA REP THAT HE SEEK APPOINTMENT NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS ISSUE WITH MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF THAI INTERNATIONAL.
- 3. RTG ACTION IS, OF COURSE, VIOLATION OF USG-RTG AIR SERVICES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BILATERAL, BUT, OTHER THAN FOR PURPOSES OF MAKING A RECORD,

THERE WOULD BE NO POINT IN OUR MAKING THAT ARGUMENT TO DR. SIRILAK. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT DR. SIRILAK, AN ADROIT AND RESPECTED SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT, KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT HE IS DOING AND HAS THE WILL AND THE MANDATE OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO DO IT. THEREFORE, ANY ATTEMPT ON OUR PART TO HINT AT, OR TO THREATEN, TO TAKE RE-TALIATORY MEASURES AGAINST AIR SIAM IN SUPPORT OF OUR BELIEFS REGARDING THIS RTG VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT WOULD BE MET AT BEST WITH A PATIENT SMILE AND AT WORST WITH FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON US AIRLINE OPERATIONS HERE. THE FACT IS, OF COURSE, THAT THE OVERWHELMING COMMERCIAL DOMINANCE BY US AIRLINES IN THE US-THAILAND MARKET BY ITS NATURE ALSO RENDERS OUR AIRLINES VULNERABLE TO WHATEVER WINDS OF CHANGE BLOW THROUGH THE RTG. IN SUM, US AIRLINES NEED BANGKOK; THAI INTERNATIONAL, THE NATIONAL AIRLINE, ON THE OTHER HAND DOES NOT NEED ACCESS TO THE US (AND WOULD NOT BE DISTRESSED TO SEE AIR SIAM, ITS PRIVATELY-OWNED RIVAL, GET A BLOODY NOSE AS A RESULT OF A USG-RTG SLUGGING MATCH).

4. THEREFORE, INASMUCH AS WE BELIEVE PAA CAN SURVIVE HERE DESPITE THE LOSS, FOR TIME BEING, OF THE ABILITY TO OPERATE FLIGHTS 841/842, WE THINK USG INTERESTS WILL BE BEST SERVED BY CLOSING OUR ROUND EYES AT THIS TIME TO THE LEGAL ISSUES RAISED BY RTG ACTION IN HOPE THAT TEMPORARY SHUTDOWN OF 841/842 OPERATIONS WILL SERVE RTG NEEDS FOR SHOW OF FORCE AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY DISPLAY OF AMITY IN PREPARATION FOR UPCOMING TALKS. KINTNER

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